



The White Horse Federation
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Dear Parent/ Carer

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Wk. four update from the WHF Special school sector- Nylands, St Luke's and The Peak Academy

This week I write to you as a father first. I admit, this week has been tough. Week 4 of the lockdown and as a parent, I have felt the strain hearing my own son struggling with online learning. He wasn't moaning, simply overwhelmed with the immense amount of work from the school. I was worried, sad and wondered what could I do to help? I felt at a complete loss and this was slightly harder to swallow because he doesn't live with me full time and I just wanted to give him a hug and say it'll be ok. So, I contacted the school and had a great chat with his tutor, she was hugely supportive and within 24hrs he was calmer and back on track. I even found out he was doing incredibly well and this made me feel so proud. So, the morale of the story for me, even when I felt the strain this week, is to communicate. Everyone is doing their best and they will move heaven and earth to help because that's just what teachers do!

So, my main message this week is to say WELL DONE! You are all surviving this pandemic and, in some cases, thriving. Whatever your personal circumstances, I think you're doing a great job. I know the schools have high expectations and set a lot of work and are delivering brilliant online lessons. All I ask is you keep doing your best. However, if it getting a bit too much, please pick up the phone and talk to us. I know everyone's circumstances are very different and I appreciate that.

Here are a few comments I've been sent by the schools this week from parents....

"Our family would like to thank the Academy for their outstanding commitment to maintaining education and support to our fostered child during the Covid lockdowns. Our young man has had a complete online programme of lessons, weekly telephone support from the School Counsellor and where possible home visits from his form tutor and T/As. The Academy has worked with us as a family to tailor the approach to learning that best works for our young person's specific needs. The staff at the Academy are very approachable and deal with any issues swiftly and professionally".

"I cannot thank the staff enough, they truly offer the person-centred learning that the young people at the school need. The level of communication between home and school is excellent, I am always aware of what is going on at school as parentmail is used effectively. They also call frequently, specific to my son, and always in a positive and supportive way. The current provision, 5 days in school out of every 5, in split weeks, is great, allowing them to attend school at some point every week keeps them focussed, and the online live teams teaching, is as bespoke as the in-class lessons. My thanks go to all the staff at The Academy, for making my sons transition such a positive experience even in these difficult times".

"Prior to lockdown 3 happening, the school contacted me to let me know of the options available, for our boy to consider, for his schooling throughout this time. He opted to do online (live) lessons, full time. Each lesson is presented live through Microsoft Teams, and is going really well. The teachers are managing the class perfectly, considering the majority of the pupils appear on a screen rather than in person in class. Such a hard job to do but they're pulling it off! His teacher or TA are in touch every Friday, to give a weekly progression report, but they will also phone or email, during the week, regarding any other queries they might have. Likewise, I can contact them

and they respond in good time. Well done to all involved. These are really bizarre times for everyone, but the support and teaching is faultless. Thank you”.

I thank you all for these comments and encourage you to keep sending these to the staff whilst we remain steadfast in our Pledges to you.

We promise 3 things **“The White Horse Pledge”**

1. Covid safety at all times
2. High quality educational delivery
3. Well-being of staff and pupils

If at anytime you feel we can improve, please don't hesitate to contact me or the Principal and we can work together. Of course, if you feel we are doing a good job please let us know. Its nice to hear positives as well.

Celebrations

In brief, I have witnessed and heard of some incredible pupils and staff who have risen to the challenge this week. In no particular order here are just a few of the highlights from week 4;

- All three Special schools for their continued support to pupils, families and staff.
- Mr Coleman at The Peak, and how impressed we have been with the way he has adapted and taken new strategies on board. Mr Coleman is the new PE teacher at Peak and we couldn't be prouder to have him.
- Mrs Buckingham and her staff team at St Luke's who continue to drive up the performance of the school 'It isn't a Good school, it's a Great school' (Ryleigh, Yr. 7). I really love hearing that this week.
- The interaction from Swindon Town FC and their delivery of books to Nylands. Mr Holroyde couldn't wait to show me when I visited. I'm not sure who was more excited to see the Swindon mascot! Its for the pupils Mr Holroyde.
- Over 650 live lessons taught this week by all 3 Special Schools.
- The ongoing business continuity from all 3 schools ensuring we keep moving projects on to ensure the very best for your pupils.
- Increased onsite face to face attendance across the special school sector

Lastly, your child's welfare continues to be our highest priority during face to face support and when studying at home. All our staff are working as normal and are available for advice and support. Please let us know if there is anything which we should be aware of or can help with. The weeks ahead are going to be difficult for all of us, but better days are coming.

If you have any questions, please contact me or the schools.

Many thanks for your support

Yours sincerely,



Richard Lewis
Director SEMH, The White Horse Federation/ Principal, The Peak Academy